

MT LOFTY BOTANIC GARDEN

APRIL 2023 walk from the LOWER CAR PARK



To help keep visitors COVID-19 safe we provide a copy on the Noticeboard at the Garden that may be photographed to take with you or there is a downloadable version on our website (<https://www.friendsbgadelaide.com/guided-walks>)

Cooler nights and recent rain are producing a rapid progression of autumnal colour at the Mt Lofty Botanic Garden. There are still many plants flowering as well and this, together with sunny days, makes it a popular time to visit. This walk visits the South American Gully.

From the car park take the road around the lake in a clockwise direction, passing the Chris Steele Scott Pavilion. Up the bank on the left **oriental bittersweet** (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) is now showing its butter yellow autumn leaves and berries. The yellow berries will soon split to reveal red seeds which persist into winter. Oriental bittersweet is native to China, Japan, and Korea.

As you approach South American Gully a bright purple carpet of **Verbena rigida**, known as **slender vervain** or **tuberous vervain**, is a flowering herbaceous perennial plant in the family Verbenaceae. It is native to Brazil and Argentina. Growing from underground tubers to 60 cm, it has a spreading habit, with stalkless toothed leaves and clusters of scented, bright purple or magenta flowers held on branched stalks in summer and early autumn. It is a worthy addition to a mixed border where it will grow through other plants to display its flowers for the butterflies and bees.

Before you turn left up the Gully, the **Bolivian fuchsia** is eye-catching. Most fuchsia species are native to Central and South America. **Fuchsia boliviana var. luxurians** is from Peru, Bolivia and northern Argentina but grows well here in cool damp gullies. Plants can grow to 4 m and the big bunches of long white and red flowers attract not only bird and bee pollinators but also butterflies and humming birds in South America. The fruits are edible and the leaves deciduous.

As you ascend the Gully, deep purple flowers of the **glory bush** or **princess flower**, **Tibouchina urvilleana** become obvious. It is an attractive, evergreen ornamental plant native to Brazil. The elegant red flower buds gather in clusters at the end of shoots and open to large bright purple flowers (5–8 cm diameter) with satiny, delicately lined petals and blackish stamens protruding from the petals, giving a fuzzy appearance. The soft, hairy leaves about 10 cm long are oval-shaped and surrounded by a discreet red border. In autumn the leaves turn a coppery colour.

Two interesting members of the salvia family (Lamiaceae) are on the right. Central and South America are two of the distinct regions of biodiversity for this family, the others being Central Asia, the Mediterranean and Eastern Asia. In common with many plants in the family, **Lepechinia salviae** has fragrant foliage, very apparent when brushed against, and the characteristic square stems. It resembles and is related to salvias (sages). It produces tall flowering spikes of magenta for several weeks from late summer to autumn and is drought tolerant after it's established.

Andean silver leaved sage (*Salvia discolor*) is rare in its natural habitat in Peru and unusual in gardens. The contrasting silver/grey leaves and pale green/white hood over the black flowers is striking. It is among the hardiest of salvias, even coping with frosts. Small birds and bees pollinate the flowers and other insects are attracted to the sticky stems.

On the right, just before the junction with a right turning path, is **Chilean lantern tree** (*Crinodendron hookerianum*). The Chilean lantern tree is endemic to a central section of Chile where it grows near streams and in humid, shady places. This shrub or small tree has lanceolate toothed leaves but when the waxy pinkish-red flowers dangling from pedicels appear, it becomes really eye catching and ornamental. The genus name is derived from the Greek for "lily tree" and particularly refers to the white flowers on **C. patagua** which is also growing in South American Gully (left over the hump-

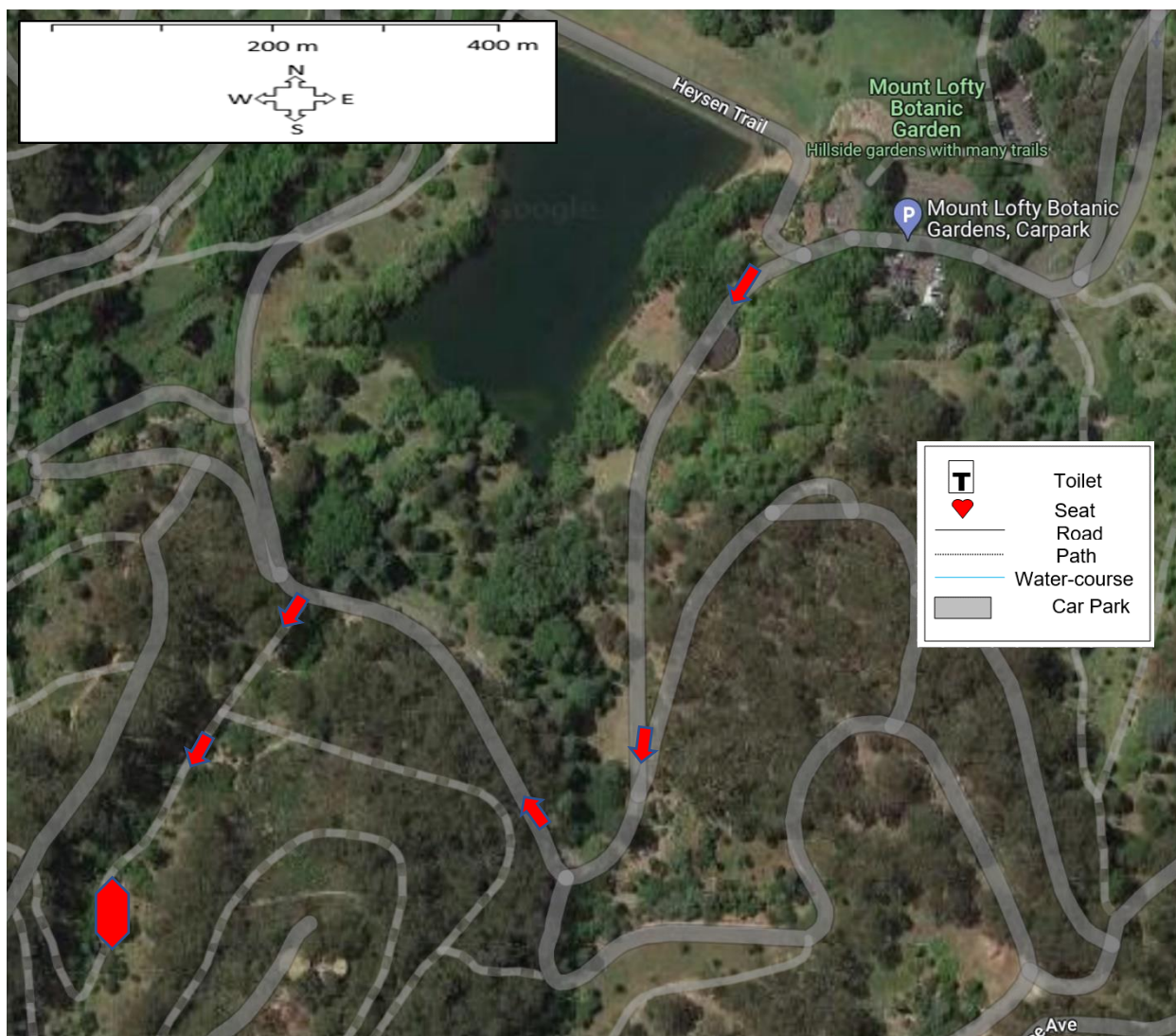
back bridge) and it honours the great English botanist, explorer and first Director of Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, William Jackson Hooker.

The red flowering ***Ganna warscewiczii*** is a species of canna from Costa Rica and Brazil. The shining dark green leaves have a fine red border and are borne on dark red-brown stems along with dense spikes of bright scarlet flowers, followed by interesting dark red seed capsules. It forms clumps from fleshy underground rhizomes when grown in a moist position but does not get out of hand as some cannas can. An exotic plant in any sense of the word.

If you have the energy, continue uphill to the humpback bridge. Cross the bridge and ascend the steps to the first landing where over to your right is the unusual, symmetrical form of a young **monkey puzzle tree (*Araucaria araucana*)**. Native to Chile and Argentina it is a member of the ancient family the Araucariaceae, which also includes the kauri pines (***Agathis*** spp.) and the Wollemi pine, as well as many other araucarias. Monkey puzzle trees are widely cultivated in areas of the UK where it is reported that in around 1850, a garden visitor remarked “it would puzzle a monkey to climb that”. The name stuck.

You can continue up the steps and explore some of the less well-known parts of the garden or retrace your steps to the base of the South American Gully where you regain the road which encircles the lake. Then walking either left or right will return you to the car park.

HM, BF, TA, EB, RH, JH, and NF 3/23



This leaflet has been prepared by the Garden Guides funded by the Friends of the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide Inc.
For information about the Friends and/or guided walks, please telephone 8222 9367
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